

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-08 IO-13 ACDA-12 /092 W
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R 171719Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 043
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: XGDS 1
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, EI, UK
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH JACK LYNCH

1. I HAD AN HOUR ALONE WITH IRISH TAOISEACH (PRIME MINISTER) JACK LYNCH ON MONDAY, JANUARY 16, IN HIS OFFICE. WE TALKED ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, BUT MOSTLY ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND. THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS REMARKS FOLLOWS.

2. LYNCH SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE FURORE FOLLOWING HIS JANUARY 8 RADIO INTERVIEW REMARKS ON NORTHERN IRELAND HAD DIED DOWN. HE THOUGHT THAT THE HMG REACTION, SURPRISING TO HIM, CAME ABOUT BECAUSE OF CALLAGHAN'S ABSENCE AND A KIND OF DRIFTING GOVERNMENT WHICH GAVE MASON HIS HEAD. THE MAIN PRESS REACTION WAS ORCHESTRATED BY THE U.K. FOREIGN OFFICE, LYNCH BELIEVES. THERE WAS NO WAY THAT ANY OF THE JOURNALISTS BY SUNDAY EVENING COULD HAVE HAD THE TEXT OF HIS REMARKS. IN ANY EVENT, IT WAS APPARENT BY THURSDAY THAT MASON FELT HE HAD GONE TOO FAR AND DECIDED TO BACK DOWN.

3. I ASKED LYNCH IF HE HAD REALLY INTENDED MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE FOR HIS RADIO INTERVIEW. HE REPLIED: "NONE WHATEVER." HE SAID THAT HE HAD MAINLY WANTED TO COMMENT ON THE IRISH ECONOMY,
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STRICTLY FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, AND HAD NOT EXPECTED THE INTERVIEW TO GO ON AS LONG AS IT DID OR TO GET VERY DEEPLY INTO NORTHERN IRELAND MATTERS. HE HAD THOUGHT IT WAS ALL QUITE ROUTINE, WITH NOTHING "STARTLING." THERE HAD BEEN A SHARP REACTION IN LONDON AND BELFAST TO HIS COMMENTS ON "POWER SHARING," BUT LYNCH SAID HE HAD MADE THE SAME REMARKS IN HIS LONDON NEWS CONFERENCE AFTER HIS MEETING IN OCTOBER

WITH CALLAGHAN AND REPEATED THEM TO THE DAIL LATER. ALSO, EVEN GARRET FITZGERALD, FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER AND NOW OPPOSITION LEADER, HAD BEEN ON RECORD IN MAY, 1977, AS NOTING THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD ASSURED HIM THERE WOULD BE NO DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT WITHOUT POWER-SHARING.

4. LYNCH SAID THAT THIS AFFAIR HAD PERHAPS BROUGHT ABOUT SOME GOOD, AND THAT THERE IS EVIDENCE OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE IN THE BRITISH REACTION WITH REGARD TO POWER-SHARING. HE THEN WENT INTO SOME DETAIL ON HIS THINKING ON THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND:--THE BRITISH SHOULD HAVE LONG SINCE, AND SHOULD NOW, DECLARE THEIR RECOGNITION THAT EVENTUAL RE-UNIFICATION OF THE ISLAND IS THE ANSWER, THOUGH IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO SPECIFY ANY TIMETABLE. IT WOULD NOT COME IN "MY LIFETIME," HE SAID, BY WHICH HE MEANT HIS POLITICAL LIFETIME.

--AS PART OF THE ABOVE THERE SHOULD BE A RECOGNITION THAT NORTHERN IRELAND IS NOT JUST ANOTHER PART OF THE UK, BUT DIFFERENT.

--THE UNIONISTS, AS HARD-HEADED BUSINESSMEN (AT LEAST SOME OF THEM, NOT THE IAN PAISLEY SORT), WOULD RECOGNIZE THAT INDEPENDENCE WOULD NOT WORK. INDEPENDENCE WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE A PERIOD OUT OF THE COMMON MARKET, WHICH WOULD NOT MAKE ECONOMIC SENSE. ACCOMMODATION WITH THE REST OF

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IRELAND IS THE ONLY ANSWER. THUS, A FIRST STEP WOULD BE FOR THEM TO MAKE A DEAL WITH THE CATHOLIC MINORITY. THE SECOND STEP WOULD BE TO MAKE A DEAL WITH THE REPUBLIC.

--LYNCH SAID THAT HE HAD ALWAYS ENVISAGED VARIOUS JOINT COMMISSIONS, E.G., A SECURITY ONE ON ARMY/POLICE AND A FINANCIAL ONE. THE EXTENSIVE BRITISH SUBVENTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE WOUND DOWN GRADUALLY AND NEW FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WORKED OUT INVOLVING THE REPUBLIC. THE COMMISSIONS WOULD SLOWLY ARRANGE AND HELP CARRY OUT A PHASED LONG-TERM CHANGEOVER. IT WOULD BE A COMPLICATED PROCESS WITH PERHAPS A CANTONAL SYSTEM ON THE SWISS MODEL BEING USED.

--HE HAD THOUGHT EARLIER OF A UN FORCE REPLACING THE BRITISH ARMY AS IN CYPRUS, BUT REALIZES THAT THIS WOULD GIVE THE BRITISH PROBLEMS IN TERMS OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY. AN ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE A JOINT IRISH-BRITISH FORCE, BUT EXACTLY HOW THIS WOULD WORK IN PRACTICE HE DID NOT KNOW.

5. BUT NONE OF THIS KIND OF THINKING EVER GETS STARTED, LYNCH SAID, BECAUSE THE BRITISH WILL NOT TELL THE UNIONISTS THAT THEY HAVE TO START. THE BRITISH GUARANTEE TO THE UNIONISTS RESULTS IN MAINTENANCE OF THE STATUS QUO, WHICH

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BY ANY STANDARD IS NOT GOOD. YET NEW THINKING HAS TO GET STARTED BECAUSE THE VIOLENCE, EVEN IF SUPPRESSED NOW, WOULD FLARE UP AGAIN. IN 10-20 YEARS, THINGS MIGHT BE VERY BAD INDEED.

6. LYNCH BROUGHT UP THE AMNESTY POINT ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE, AND SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE COULD SEE AFTER EVERY MAJOR WAR THERE HAS BEEN AN AMNESTY OF SOME KIND. IF A POLITICAL SOLUTION COMES IN IRELAND AND THERE IS A GENERALLY ACCEPTED PEACE SETTLEMENT, THEN AN AMNESTY COULD NATURALLY COME ABOUT BOTH IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH.

7. I ASKED HIM ABOUT HIS VIEW OF THE PRESENT BRITISH POLITICAL SITUATION. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT ANY MOVEMENT ON THE NORTH WOULD HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITAIN. CALLAGHAN AND EVEN HE, LYNCH, CAN BE MOST FORTHCOMING IN GIVING THEIR PERSONAL VIEWS DURING BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT IN POLITICS PERSONAL OPINION IS MEANINGLESS UNLESS A GOVERNMENT AND A PARTY WILL FOLLOW. LYNCH ADDED THAT IN MODERN TIMES NO VOTES ARE GENERALLY WON ON NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY IN

BRITISH ELECTIONS, THOUGH SOME CAN BE LOST--THUS IT IS POLITICALLY ADVISABLE FOR CALLAGHAN TO IGNORE IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

8. I REQUESTED THE TAOISEACH TO CLARIFY: DOES HE INTEND ANY BIG MOVE OR MAJOR INITIATIVE ON NORTHERN IRELAND NOW? HE REPLIED HE HAS NO SUCH INTENTION. SHANNON

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